



Idaho Naturalist news

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 15, 2014

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The Idaho Naturalist News is a quarterly newsletter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program.

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Winter Ducks

Bob Ellis, Idaho Master Naturalist, Upper Snake Chapter



This is a gadwall I photographed at the Wilsons Ponds just south of Nampa during the first week of November in 2013. These ponds offer a wonderful opportunity to see a great variety of ducks and since the ponds aren't very large, close viewing is possible. One almost always sees lesser scaup, ring neck ducks, and coots. Often buffleheads are seen. One can also often view Black-crowned night herons, although you really have to be on the lookout for them.

Wood River Valley Chapter Leader

Meet the Environmental Resource Center's (ERC) new Program Director and Wood River Valley Master Naturalist Chapter Leader, Hadley DeBree.

Hadley grew up in the Wood River Valley, graduating from Wood River High School. She then received a B.A. in Biology-Environmental Studies from Whitman College and, upon graduating, completed two years as an AmeriCorps member for the ERC.

Hadley is excited to be back at the ERC, sharing her passion for biology and the environment with the community that initially inspired that love. She is looking forward to working closely with our existing Master Naturalists and implementing future Master Naturalist courses and projects in the Wood River Valley.



Hadley can be reached at 208-726-4333 or hadley@ercsv.org.



Dawn Visitor

Poo Wright-Pulliam, Idaho Master Naturalist, Wood River Valley Chapter

This is a photo of a male lazuli bunting that has been coming every morning at dawn to my feeders since September 30, 2013. He comes several times a day and again at dusk. He eats millet. . . and he SHOULD be in Mexico for the winter. He appears to have an injured wing that perhaps healed wrong. I think his instincts told him he couldn't make the long distance flight with his flock. He's quite the survivor!

Stewardship of the Waterlife Discovery Center

Gail Bolin, Idaho Master Naturalist, Pend Oreille Chapter

When our chapter formed 3 years ago, we were so delighted to have the Waterlife Discovery Center to call home; however, we soon realized as with any home, we had upkeep. You know the normal routine of keeping a place clean and tidy, such as vacuuming, mopping, washing windows and cleaning the toilet. Oh, that's not so bad we thought, we can easily handle that. But oh, woe, wait a minute, there's more—there's over three acres of lawn, trees, shrubs and weeds, lots of weeds! Plus fish viewing windows to scrub, and a pond with invading reed canary grass. Oh my, how will we ever keep up?

Needless to say we were a bit overwhelmed by the sheer volume of chores and no money in the budget to hire it done. However, our worries were soon resolved; help was on the way! Our IDFG chapter advisor, Pete Gardner, also oversees a group of volunteers based in Coeur d'Alene. Each week, during the height of the growing season, they would converge on the center to mow, trim, weed whack, prune trees, install signs, put up bird houses and help with whatever needed to be done. Thanks Guys, you're amazing!

In addition to the maintenance chores, chapter members also participated in a number of other projects. We hosted three educational presentations for the public at the local library and several members assisted with the IDFG Multi-Species Baseline Initiative. We had a booth at Earth Day and the Bonner County Fair. Others did vegetation monitoring in the Pack River Delta and Lighting Creek drainage, participated in IDFG fish egg harvest, and launched the "Master Naturalist on Duty" at the Waterlife Discovery Center.



The WaterLife Discovery Center is a habitat education and interpretive area on the shores of the Pend Oreille River near Sandpoint, Idaho. The property consists of 3.5 acres of developed interpretive exhibits and a 6.5 acre forested wetland with trails and interpretive signage.



Planting, mowing, cleaning, raking, scrubbing. So much work to do.



Clem Yonker cleans the inside of the fish-viewing windows. An endless job.



*Working at the WLDC from left to right: *Dennis Braun, Larry Ellis, Conrad Lahr, Tony Kastella, *Kay Duchow, Tom Price and *Derek Antonelli. * Indicates IMNs.*



*Over the past two years we have planted over 400 native plants to improve wildlife habitat and curb erosion. Left to right: Lake*A*Syst Coordinator Molly McCahon; Master Naturalists Kay Duchow and Dennis Braun .*

Photos by Gail Bolin

14 Annual Idaho Environmental Education Conference

Exploring Your Backyard, and Beyond!

February 28-March 1, 2014 | Red Lion Downtowner | Boise



This popular conference is Idaho's premier gathering for those passionate about learning and our environment. The conference highlights effective, affordable Idaho programs, especially those that are hands on, interdisciplinary and encourage kids to get outside and learn about their local environments. Learn more and register at www.idahoeec.org.

Keynote Speaker - Abby Ruskey, innovative educator and director of E3 Washington and coordinator of the groundbreaking 2-year Educator-to-Educator Model Project.

Concurrent Sessions - Sixteen informative, scientifically sound and well-balanced sessions provide useful and Idaho-specific inspiration for teaching about diverse local environments and communities.

Field Investigations - Four off-site trips. Go deep while enjoying the local environment around Boise.

Friday Awards Luncheon – awards presented by Idaho astronaut Barbara Morgan!

Environmental Educators of the Year Awards - recognizing Idaho's best

Idaho Green Schools Challenge Award winners – sponsors US Green Building Council – Idaho and Wells Fargo Bank

Friday Night EE Celebration – Special after-dark visit to MK Nature Center followed by popcorn and a movie. *Green Fire* follows the life of Aldo Leopold, renowned American scientist, ecologist, forester and environmentalist who wrote the influential *Sand County Almanac*.

Silent Auction with Themed Baskets - a conference highlight & important fun-raiser for IdEEA

Exhibit Fair – 25 tables filled with resources for classroom and community educators

PRECONFERENCE WORKSHOP: COMMON CORE On Thursday, February 27, 2014, IdEEA will offer an 8-hour introductory workshop for providers who want to learn Common Core basics and how to present and frame their programs, materials and presentations to meet teacher and classroom needs. It will also benefit classroom teachers who want to know learn more about available environmental education programs.

Register at www.idahoeec.org

Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) available for teachers!

Scholarships available for formal & non-formal educators and students!

Affordable registration fees! Always



A Visit with the Palisades Creek Mountain Goat Herd

Evan Tibbott, Idaho Master Naturalist, Upper Snake Chapter

On Sunday, January 5, Glenn DeVoe and Evan Tibbott drove to Alpine, Wyoming, to look for a group of mountain goats that had been reported in the area. An estimated 35 animals were observed browsing on the south-facing slope within a half mile of town in small bands and one large group of approximately 20. With good thermal cover, they were grazing mostly on bitterbrush, occasionally pawing the ground for other edibles. Despite numerous sightseers, they seemed unperturbed by the attention. Two of them came down to the road while we were parked less than 30 feet away taking pictures.

Glenn found out that these goats (known as the Palisades Creek herd) originated from an Idaho Fish & Game transplant in 1969 of three animals from the Snow Peak WMA (Shoshone County in the Panhandle) and two animals came from the Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area in the Clearwater Mountains. An aerial survey of this herd in 2013 counted 250 goats in Idaho. In 2012, a Wyoming Fish and Game aerial survey found 106 goats on the Wyoming side.

An Idaho-controlled hunt in 2013 allowed five goats (either sex, but no nannies with kids) to be taken from that area (Unit 67, south and east of Palisades Creek to the Wyoming line). Wyoming has allowed six to eight goats annually since 1999 to be taken from the Palisades herd.



Photos by Glenn DeVoe, Idaho Master Naturalist, Upper Snake Chapter.

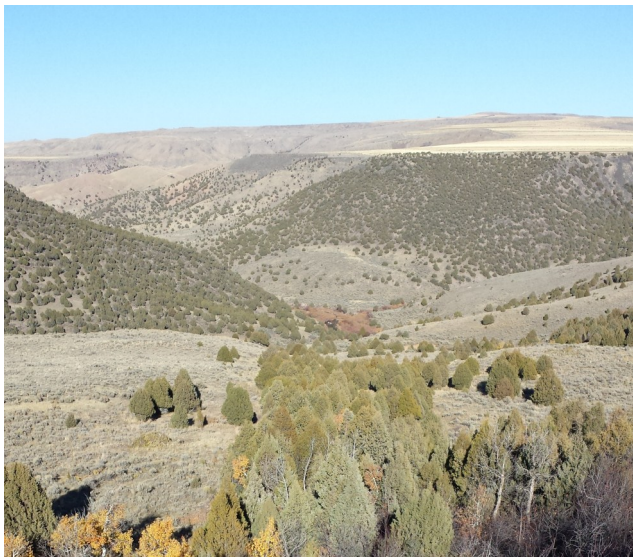


Fence Removal on the Tex Creek WMA

Robert Anderl, Idaho Master Naturalist, Upper Snake Chapter

The Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area is an important home to elk, mule deer, moose, and upland birds (sage and sharp-tailed grouse), as well as other animals, birds and trout. Located about 14 miles northeast of Idaho Falls, this WMA is a patchwork collection of land that comprises approximately 35,000 acres owned by Idaho Fish and Game, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the Bureau of Land Management. Much of the land area in this WMA was used previously for agricultural and ranch purposes and was acquired over the years to provide important habitat especially for wintering elk and mule deer and year-round habitat for upland birds. During the winter season, as many as 3,000 elk and 3,500 mule deer may be found on this WMA. Additional information about the Tex Creek WMA can be found on the Idaho Fish and Game website and on a You-Tube link to a Video entitled “Tex Creek: The Last Stand” that was developed in 2013 by Idaho Fish and Game and Tight Line Media.

Because of the agricultural history of use in this WMA, many fence lines still exist and these can present a hindrance to migration of elk and deer in this important winter habitat. At the request of the local Idaho Fish and Game office, members of the Upper Snake Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalists organization volunteered to remove designated fence lines in the WMA. Twelve Master Naturalists helped on three days in October to remove approximately 1 to 1.5 miles of fence line (barbed wire and metal posts) in one key area. Six pickup loads of fence material were removed and taken to a metal recycle business in Idaho Falls. This project will resume in the spring after winter snows disappear and roads are dry.



Beautiful Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area! This shot is taken where the fence was removed. Photo by Shane Roberts, Tex Creek Wildlife Biologist, IDFG.



Barbed wire piled up in the trailer. Photo by Teresa Meachum, Idaho Master Naturalist, Upper Snake Chapter.

Hagerman Inspiration

Bob Ellis, Sagebrush-steppe Master Naturalist



Natural surprises
burst of flying ducks
color imprints on the mind
of the pond watcher.

Sagebrush-steppe Chapter Celebrates Six Years



Welcome the 2014 class of the Sagebrush-steppe Chapter! This is the chapter's sixth consecutive class making our membership total 115 people strong.

Chapter sponsors include the Idaho Botanical Garden, the Foothills Learning Center and the MK Nature Center. We are looking forward to working with these new participants and volunteers from previous years!

Raptor Survey

Bev Pressman and Terri Smith, Idaho Master Naturalists, McCall Chapter



Do you know these raptors? (Answers are at the bottom!)

The McCall Chapter of the Idaho Master Naturalist Program was asked to assist with a raptor survey in Valley County. The request came from Jeff Fleischer of the East Cascades Audubon Society of Bend, Oregon. Jeff is gathering raptor observations and data from Oregon and Idaho to add to the international eBird network. Our thanks to Dave Hazelton of the Golden Eagle Audubon Society of Boise, who came to McCall in November for a very helpful raptor identification training and field trip!

As best explained on the website, www.ebird.org, “eBird shares these observations with a global community of educators, land managers, ornithologists, and conservation biologists. In time these data will become the foundation for a better understanding of bird distribution across the western hemisphere and beyond.” eBird is expanding rapidly and becoming one of the largest biodiversity resources available.

Master Naturalists participating in McCall are Steve and Barbara Huff, Scott and Bev Pressman, Marjorie Chase, Annie Nies, and Terri Smith. Data pertaining to population levels and densities during these winter months is gathered monthly on specific routes. Main raptors being observed in Valley County have been bald eagles, rough-legged hawks, red-tailed hawks, northern harriers, and American kestrels.

Other chapters of Master Naturalists interested in also volunteering with the raptor survey should please contact Jeff Fleischer at raptorrunner97321@yahoo.com.

Answers to raptor identifications: **red-tailed hawk**, photo by Neil Paprocki; **Swainson's hawk**, photo by CC-BY-NC by Swtaylor, Flickr; **rough-legged hawk**, photo by Neil Paprocki.